

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of destroying documents comprising:  
supplying the documents to an apparatus adapted to shred documents and medical waste, the apparatus having little or no liquid effluent and little or no toxic air emissions;  
shredding the documents; and  
discharging the shredded documents from the apparatus.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the documents include protected health information.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein protected health information comprises demographic data that identifies an individual or for which there is a reasonable basis to believe said data can be used to identify the individual.
4. The method of claim 3, wherein the demographic data comprises:  
the individual's physical health, mental health, or medical condition; or  
health care services requested by, sought by, recommended to, administered to, and/or prescribed to the individual; or  
the billing records for the provision of health care to the individual.
5. The method of claim 3, wherein the demographic data comprises:  
names, geographic subdivisions smaller than a state, elements of dates for dates directly related to the individual, telephone numbers, fax numbers, electronic mail addresses, social security numbers, medical record numbers, health plan beneficiary numbers, account numbers, certificate/license numbers, vehicle identifiers and serial numbers, license plate numbers, device identifiers and serial numbers, web universal resource

locators, internet protocol address numbers, biometric identifiers, or full face photographic images.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein geographic subdivisions smaller than a state includes street address, city, county, precinct, zip code, or their equivalent geocodes.

7. The method of claim 5, wherein elements of dates includes birth date, admission date, discharge date, date of death and age.

8. The method of claim 5, wherein biometric identifiers includes finger or voice prints.

9. The method of claim 1, further comprising supplying medical waste to the apparatus, prior to, concurrent with, or after supplying the documents.

10. The method of claim 9, further comprising mixing the documents with the medical waste in the apparatus.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the medical waste comprises, pathological waste, sharps, bandages, rags, body fluids, cultures, stocks of etiological agents, IV bags, medicine bottles, diseased animal carcasses, diseased human bodies, or natural disaster victims.

12. The method of claim 1, further comprising mixing the documents with contaminated food in the apparatus.

13. The method of claim 1, further comprising mixing the documents with illegal drugs or expired pharmaceuticals.

14. The method of claim 1, further comprising the step of spraying the documents with water to moisten them.

15. The method of claim 14, further comprising heating the moistened documents with microwaves.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising heating the moistened documents with conductive heat, or infrared heat.
17. The method of claim 15, further comprising preheating the documents prior to shredding.
18. The method of claim 15, further comprising subjecting the documents to X-rays or ultra violet light.
19. The method of claim 15, further comprising exposing the documents to ozone.
20. The method of claim 15, further comprising maintaining the documents in a temperature maintenance chamber at a sufficient temperature for a sufficient amount of time to kill or destroy little or all germs, bacteria, and viruses thereon.
21. The method of claim 1, further comprising compacting the shredded documents after the step of discharging the shredded documents from the shredding apparatus.
22. The method of claim 1, wherein the discharge from the shredding apparatus is suitable for landfill or recycling without additional treatment.
23. An apparatus for processing of documents and medical waste comprising;
  - a shredding mechanism;
  - a microwave chamber;
  - a temperature maintenance chamber; and
  - an ozone electrode,wherein the apparatus has little or no liquid effluent and little or no toxic air emissions;

24. The apparatus of claim 23, further comprising a secondary radiation source in the temperature maintenance chamber.

25. The apparatus of claim 24, wherein the secondary radiation source emits X-rays or UV light.